اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer

Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah 98 Al-Baiyinah

سُوْرَةُ لَمْ يَكُنِ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

لَمْ يَكُنِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ وَالْمُشْرِكِيْنَ مُنْفَكِّيْنَ حَتّٰى تَاْتِيَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ ۙ﴿۱﴾

(98-1) Those who disbelieved [1] – be they from the People of the Book or from those who associated [2] others with Allah in His Divinity – will not desist from unbelief until the Clear Proof should come to them; [3]

(1) Here the word kufr (unbelief) has been used in its widest sense, which includes different forms of the unbelieving attitude. For example, some were unbelievers in the sense that they did not acknowledge Allah at all; some did acknowledge Allah but did not regard Him as the One and only God, but worshipped others as well, thinking they were associates in divine Being or divine attributes and powers in one way or the other; some acknowledged oneness of God but committed some kind of shirk as well; some acknowledged God but did not acknowledge His Prophets and the guidance brought by them; some acknowledged one particular Prophet and did not acknowledge another; others rejected the Hereafter. In short, there were different kinds of kufr in which the people were involved. And the statement: The disbelievers from among the people of the Book and those who associate, does not mean that some of them were not involved in kufr, but that those who were involved in kufr were of two kinds: the followers of the Book and the mushriks. Here, min (among) has not been used for division but for explanation, as for example, in (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 30), where it has been said Fajtanib-ur rijsa min al-authan, which means: Therefore, guard yourselves against the filth of idols, and not, guard yourselves against the filth which is in the idols. Likewise, alladhina kafaru min ahl-il-Kitabi wal-mushrikin means: the

disbelievers from among the followers of the Book and the mushriks, and not, those who have disbelieved from these two groups.

(2) Despite the common factor of kufr between them the two groups have been mentioned by separate names. The followers of the Book imply the people who possessed any of the revealed Books, even if in corrupted form, sent to the former Prophets, and they believed in it. And the mushriks (idolaters) imply the people who did not follow any Prophet nor believed in any Book. Although in the Quran the shirk, (polytheism, idolatry) of the people of the Book has been mentioned at many places, e.g. about the Christians it has been said: They say: God is one of the three (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 73); The Messiah is son of God Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 30); The Messiah, son of Mary, is God (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 17). And about the Jews it has been said: They say: Ezra is son of God (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 30), yet nowhere in the Quran has the term mushrik been used for them, but they have been mentioned as alladhina ul-ul-Kitaba (those who were given the Book), or by the words Jews and Christians. For they believed in the principle of Tauhid (Oneness of God) as the true religion, and then committed shirk. Contrary to this, for others than the followers of the Book, the word mushrik has been used as a term, for they acknowledged shirk (idolatry) as true religion and dis-acknowledged Tauhid. This distinction between the two groups holds good not only in the use of the term but also in the Shariah injunctions. Animal flesh duly slaughtered by the followers of the Book has been declared lawful for the Muslims if they slaughter a lawful animal in the name of Allah in the prescribed way, and permission to marry their women has also been given. On the contrary, neither the animal slaughtered by the mushriks is lawful for the Muslims nor is marriage with their women.

(3) That is, there was no means of their being freed from this state of unbelief except that a clear evidence (of the truth) should come and make them understand the falsity of every form of kufr and its being untrue, and should present the right way before them in a clear and rational way. This does not mean that

after the coming of the clear evidence they would give up kufr but that in the absence of the clear evidence it was not at all possible that they would be delivered from that state. However, if even after its coming, some of them still persisted in their kufr, then they themselves would be responsible for it; they could not complain that Allah had made no arrangement for their guidance. This same thing bas been expressed in the Quran at different places in different ways, e.g. in (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 9), it is said: Allah has taken upon Himself to show the right way; in (Surah Al-Lail, Ayat 12), it is said: It is for Us to show the way; in (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 163-165): O! Prophet, We have sent revelation to you just as We had sent it to Noah and other Prophets after him (peace be upon them all)... All these Messengers were sent as bearers of good news and warners so that, after their coming, the people should have no excuse left to plead before Allah; and in (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 19): O people of the Book, this Messenger of Ours has come to you and is making clear to you the teachings of the right way after a long interval during which there had come no Messengers, lest you should say: No bearer of good news nor warner came to us. Lo, now the bearer of good news and warner has come.

رَسُۡ لٞ مِّنَ الِاَيَتۡلُوا صُحُفًا مُّطَهَّرَ ۙ ۲

(98-2) a Messenger [4] from Allah, reciting from Purified Scrolls; [5]

(4) Here, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been called the clear evidence, for his life before and after Prophethood, his presenting a Book like the Quran in spite of being un-lettered, his bringing about an extraordinary revolution in the lives of the converts to Islam through education and training, his educating the people in rational beliefs, clean and pure forms of worship, excellent morals and the best principles and injunctions for human life, perfect harmony and agreement between his word and deed, and his constancy of purpose in respect of his message in spite of every kind of resistance and opposition, all these were clear signs of the truth that he was Allah’s Messenger.

(5) Lexically, suhuf means written pages, but in the Quran this word has been used as a term for the Books revealed to the Prophets of Allah (peace be upon them); and by the scriptures are meant the scriptures which are free from every mixture of falsehood, every kind of error and moral filth. The full import of these words becomes evident when one studies the Bible (and the books of other religions as well) vis-a-vis the Quran, and finds written in them along with sound teachings such things as are not only opposed to truth and reason but are also morally contemptible. After reading them when one turns to the Quran, one realizes how pure and hallowed this Book is.

فِيۡهَا كُتُبٌ قَيِّمَةٌ ۚ﴿۳﴾

(98-3) in writings wherein are scriptures, absolutely true and unerring.

وَ مَا تَفَرَّقَ الَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡكِتٰبَ اِلَّا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا جَآءَتۡهُمُ الۡبَيِّنَةُ ﴿۴﴾

(98-4) Nor did those to whom the Book had been given split up until after the Proof (of the Right Way) had come to them. (6)

(6) That is, the reason why the people of the Book before this were divided into countless sects because of different kinds of errors and deviation, was not that Allah had failed to send a clear evidence from Himself for their guidance, but the fact that they adopted the wrong way after guidance had come from Allah. Therefore, they themselves were responsible for their deviation, for Allah had fulfilled His obligation towards them. Likewise, since their scriptures are no longer pure and their books no longer consist of original and correct teachings, Allah by sending a Messenger of His, as a clear evidence, with a hallowed Book, containing sound and pure teachings, has again fulfilled His obligation towards them, so that even if after that they remained divided, they themselves should be responsible for it and should have no excuse left to plead before Allah. This has been stated at

many places in the Quran, e.g. see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 213, 253); (Surah Al-Imran, Ayat 19); (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayats 44-50); (Surah Younus, Ayat 93); (Surah Ash-Shura, Ayats 13-15); (Surah Al-Jathiyah, Ayats 16-18), along with the corresponding notes for full understanding.

وَ مَا اُمِرُوۡۤا اِلَّا لِيَعۡبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مُخۡلِصِيۡنَ لَهُ الدِّيۡنَ ۙ حُنَفَآءَ وَ يُقِيۡمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَ
يُؤۡتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَ ذٰلِكَ دِيۡنُ الۡقَيِّمَةِ ؕ ۵

(98-5) Yet all that they had been commanded was that they serve Allah, with utter sincerity, devoting themselves exclusively to Him, and that they establish Prayer and pay Zakah. That is the Right Faith. (7)

(7) That is, the message of the same religion, which now the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is preaching, had been given to the people of the Book by the Prophets who came to them and by the Books which were sent among them; they had not been enjoined any of the false belief and wicked deeds which they adopted afterwards and created different sects. Right and correct religion has always been the same: that Allah alone should be served and worshipped exclusively, none else be joined with Him in worship, man should become worshipper of One Allah alone and obedient to His command only, should establish the salat and pay the zakat. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 19 of Surah Al-Araf); (E.Ns 108, 109 of Surah Younus), (E.Ns 43 to 47 of Surah Ar-Room); (E.Ns 3, 4 of Surah Az-Zumar). Some commentators have taken the words din alqayyimah in this verse in the meaning of din al-millat alqayyimah: Religion of the righteous community. Some others have taken qayyimah in the superlative sense and understood it in the same meaning as we have adopted in our translation.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا مِنۡ اَهۡلِ الۡكِتٰبِ وَ الۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ فِىۡ نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيۡنَ فِيۡهَا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمۡ شَرُّ
الۡبَرِيَّةِ ؕ ۶

(98-6) Those who disbelieved [8] – be they from among the People of the Book or among those who associated others with Allah in His Divinity– shall be in the Fire, and will abide in it. They are the worst of creatures. [9]

(8) Disbelieved: Refused to acknowledge the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as Allah's Messenger. The meaning is that the end of those from among the mushriks and the followers of the Book, who have not acknowledged the Messenger whose emergence by itself is a clear evidence, and who is reciting to them hallowed pages containing sound and correct teachings, will be as is being described below.

(9) That is, they are worse than all creatures of God, even animals, for the animals do not possess reason and power, but these people reject the truth in spite of having reason and authority.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمْ خَيْرُ الْبَرِيَّةِ ۝٧

(98-7) But those that believe and work righteous deeds, they are the best of creatures. [10]

(10) That is, they are superior to all creatures of God, even to the angels, for the angels do not have the power to disobey, and these people adopt Allah's obedience in spite of having the power to disobey Him.

جَزَآؤُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنّٰتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۭ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوْا عَنْهُ ۭ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهٗ ۝٨

(98-8) Their recompense lies with their Lord: Gardens of eternity beneath which rivers flow; therein they shall dwell, forever and ever. Allah is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him. All this is for him who fears his Lord. [11]

(11) In other words, the person who did not live in the world fearlessly and independent of God, but feared Him at every step lest he should do something which might entail His wrath and punishment, will have this reward reserved for him with Allah.